

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EASTERN
EUROPEAN CHURCHES

from the Desk for Documentation concerning Eastern European Churches

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Introduction

The present number of "Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches" does not differ in any essential way from the preceding numbers. Under the existing circumstances, the life of the churches in the countries of Eastern Europe is pursuing its usual course.

A fairly long period of time would have to be considered before one could make a real survey of developments within the churches.

The reports of the observers and delegates of some of them at two great ecumenical meetings in Western Europe showed their interest in interchurch relationships.

The question whether anti-religious propaganda is being intensified, especially in the USSR, is answered to some extent in an open letter written by the Soviet Minister of Education, who is naturally in favour of improving atheist propaganda.

At the beginning of the new school year this autumn the Minister of Education in Moscow organised an enquiry into the problem, how the atheist education of school-children could be made more effective. The very fact of this enquiry shows that organised atheist ideology is anxious to strengthen its influence.

At the same time the Christian believers continue just as before remaining loyal and patriotic citizens, in face of this anti-religious campaign.

The fact that anti-religious propaganda is interested not only in the developments in religious ideology in its immediate environment (i.e. in the socialist countries) but also in developments in Christian theology all over the world reveals the scale of the polemic with contemporary theology in the different Christian churches.

The Jewish problem, which seems to have received less attention hitherto, is dealt with in a special article. Despite its somewhat political trend this article also gives the impression that militant atheism today realises that it is confronted by a tremendous historical task.

C H U R C H N E W S : U.S.S.R.

The Unity of the Church

"There is only one Christian Church. It is one and it is unique. It is a living, divine-human body and it is indivisible. There is only one Church of Christ. All who confess Christ as the God-man, who now belong to different Christian groups, must therefore return to the one Church of Christ and become one flock, in order to repel Satan's attacks (on the Church of Christ)". This is the substance, illustrated by numerous biblical quotations, of the introduction to a long article on the unity of the Church in the latest number of the "Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate Church" (No. 8, 1960). The author is Professor D. Diulgerov.

"Every separate member of the Church of Christ belongs to Christ. Everyone who belongs to His Church is a Christian. He cannot not be in Christ and with Christ". And the Church as the mysterious Body of Christ cannot "not be the Body of Christ, not have Christ as its Head and its Guide." The Church of Christ cannot "not be the divine-human unity, the divine-human body" (of which the nature of Christ's Church consists) ... "Those who call themselves Christians but are organised in societies are not part of the Church of Christ unless they grow together with Christ, unless they abide in Him and in His love (John 15:4), unless they love one another as Christ loved them, unless they are friends (disciples) of Christ, unless they fulfil His commandments, unless like living stones they are built into a spiritual house, which is the Church of Christ (I Peter 2:5)."

The East (continues Professor Diulgerov) "has always lived in the consciousness that Orthodoxy is world-wide, that the Orthodox Church is a real, tangible, essential fact for everyone who belongs to it and realises that it is the One, Holy, Universal, Apostolic Christian Church. Unity does not need creating today; it need only be realised by the direct experience of the individual. The Church is a living body, the Body of Christ, to which one can belong."

"Unity with the Church, and for those who return to it, can and must be striven for in the Church. That is God's will. But the right road to unity must be taken - the way taken by those who bore the Cross of Christ (the Khrestonostsy) in the days of the Early Church. Unity must be achieved by coming together in obedience to the commandments of Christ, and by accomplishing the task which He entrusted to His apostles. What is needed is a sincere joint effort to attain the ethical aims of Christianity in human life. An effort of this kind will be possible when fraternal relations are restored, nurtured by the love which radiates from the hearts of Christians - love for all men, both Christians and non-Christians. If the conditions are fulfilled for mutual recognition as Christians, and if the pure love of truth has broken through, then the first step will have been taken. The second step will be the return to the Church of Christ, the incorporation of all who believe in Christ in His Church."

The article also says: the Christian groups can (very well) unite on the same basis. They are Christian, i.e. they consist of believers who call themselves Christians and who confess Christ, but they are not "of Christ and cannot be of Christ" (ne mogut byt' Khristovy). There are no Christian churches. "There is only the one Church of Christ created by Him as His Body ..."

So we must speak of the one Church of Christ, and not of Christian churches. We may call the separate groups Christian religious fellowships (but not churches). That is essential in the interest of the members of Christ's Church as well of those who are not in close relation with it. Nor must we speak about the history of the Christian churches but about the history of the Church of Christ. For many intellectual Christians the question is an open one: which of the existing Christian fellowships is the Church of Christ? In solving this question we shall also solve the question of reunion. In other words: all the Christian fellowships must join the Church of Christ. Humility and love alike crown the achievements of the mind, so that all who call themselves Christians are one in accordance with their Lord's commandment (John 17:21-22), "That they all may be one".

"All Christians agree on this definition of the Church," continues Professor Diulgerov. But it finds expression also in different formulations which often obscure the clear concept of a believing heart. The thought of non-church-minded Christians is complex and consequently inclined to explain the nature of the Church in a different way. But Christian hearts live by the truth that the Church of Christ is one, the sole living, active divine-human body (on earth). This is seen from the urge for unity on the part of all who call themselves Christians - an urge which expresses itself in inter-confessional conferences.

"The ideal - the reunion of all (divided) Christians in one Holy, Universal, Apostolic Christian Church, is still a distant dream. It will not be realised merely at the touch of a magic wand, but through continual effort, through mutual support and systematic enlightenment of the basic truths of the Christian faith by a joint effort for renewal, perception and recognition of the beauty of everything that lives. Such efforts are being made today. So far they have followed two different courses. The first consists of all Christians who have a common concept of the challenge presented by political, economic and social life. In order to meet this challenge, a permanent organisation, 'The Universal Christian Council for Life and Work', was formed. The second course consists of efforts to achieve unity of belief, so that all Christians can accept the same clearly-defined dogmatic formulations (Poloshenia). This gave rise to the 'Faith and Order movement'. For some time these two organisations were separate, but they are now united in the World Council of Churches."

The efforts made have already borne tangible fruit. In 1929 the Presbyterian Churches in Scotland merged, in 1932 the English Methodists, and in 1925 three churches in Canada. In 1927 in China the Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian and Reformed Churches and the Moravian Brethren all merged into one single "Church of Christ". Since 1938 all the Reformed Churches in France have been united, and so have all the main confessional groups in the USA.

The Russian Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical
Youth Conference at Lausanne, 1960

On the 11th July a group of observers from the Russian Orthodox Church left Moscow for Lausanne to attend the Ecumenical Youth Conference. The group was composed of a priest named Alexei Ostapov (a lecturer at the Religious Academy in Moscow), Victor Zeitzev (who is on the staff of the Foreign Department of the Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow), Juvenaly Poiarkov (a student at the Religious Academy in Leningrad) and Stephan Kostiuik (a student at the Religious Academy in Moscow). The names of these four observers are published in the last number of the "Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate".

A detailed account of the conference is given by the "Chronicle of Life in the Russian Orthodox Churches in Western Europe", a periodical published by the Orthodox Churches of Western Europe (affiliated to the Moscow Patriarchate), which have their headquarters in Paris, No. 16, 1960.

The report describes the task of the conference, the theme of which was "Christ - the Light of the World". It quotes some striking extracts from the welcoming address given by Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, who stressed the spiritual change taking place in the Christian churches, strengthened by the influence of young Christians, also in their contacts with people outside the Church.

An address was also given by Bishop Anthony Bloom, head of the Orthodox Church in London (attached to the Moscow Patriarchate), on behalf of the Orthodox delegates (about 120 of them) from the countries represented at Lausanne.

A Serbian student gave the following description of the Conference afterwards: "I am deeply impressed by what I saw in Lausanne. The conference began with a solemn service in Lausanne cathedral, all the delegates joining in the prayers and hymns. Each delegation carried a banner showing its nationality and church affiliation, as we entered the cathedral. The conference itself opened with a prayer in the Palais Beaulieu, and the different delegations were introduced to one another. When the young Orthodox delegates (observers) from the Soviet Union were introduced including the young Baptist from Russia, Michael Zidkov, the applause was deafening. None of the other delegations received such applause."

Concerning the question of Intercommunion, which was hotly discussed at Lausanne, the "Chronicle" states that the leaders of the conference had to reject a request from some of the participants, to sweep aside the hitherto-existing difficulties about Intercommunion, and spontaneously invite all the participants to meet at the Lord's Table. The Orthodox delegates regarded a joint Communion Service of this kind as premature. They asked whether they should attend a joint Communion Service in one of the churches in Lausanne without themselves partaking of the elements. Bishop Anthony Bloom replied that it was left to the conscience of each individual Orthodox Christian, whether or not to be present at the service.

In conclusion the "Chronicle" says: "For us Orthodox the conference at Lausanne was valuable in two ways. In the first place, we had the opportunity of meeting other Orthodox Christians and discussing our Orthodox affairs. In the second place we made the acquaintance of other young Christians and told them about the heritage of our forefathers - the indissoluble, ancient unity of our different Orthodox churches and people, which is just what the young Christians from the other churches are so eagerly seeking."

Bishop Nikodim consecrated

Archimandrite Nikodim, who accompanied the delegation from the World Council of Churches throughout their visit to Soviet Russia in December 1959 (see "Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches" No. 1, 1960), was consecrated in July 1960 as a bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church with the title "Bishop of Podolsk". After his consecration (Khirotonia) he was addressed by His Holiness Patriarch Alexei as the youngest bishop in the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate Church, in the presence of a large congregation.

"At this moment, when you are entering upon your new life as a high-priest", said Patriarch Alexei, "remember that this life is a continuation of the service of the apostles on the pattern of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and handed on by him, who came 'not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Matt. 20:28). On the day of Pentecost the apostles received power when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:8) as Our Lord had promised. They laid the foundation of the Church of Christ in fulfilment of His words: 'I will build my Church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it' (Matt. 16:18). They served the Church of Christ in unselfish love 'till death'. The power which the apostles received from above does not consist of worldly honours or earthly happiness or earthly advancement; it was the power of the Holy Spirit - the power which radiates from the gifts of the spirit, faith and love."

This power of the spirit within the Church will grow stronger and overcome the world ... "Through this divine promise that His Church would grow and be invincible, Our Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, filled the apostles with confident hope by pointing out their divine vocation and the enlightenment they would receive through the Spirit. "I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (John 15:16).

"In you too, beloved brother, this gift from God, this power from above has taken up its dwelling, this power which removes all fear of difficulties and persecution from the heart of the shepherd of the Church - those difficulties which are inevitable in the difficult work of pastoral responsibility, and which cannot be overcome by human power alone.

"Our own spirit is purified by the spiritual effort of shouldering these difficulties, and we are filled with the joy which Our Lord promised to those who serve Him faithfully."

Up to the present Bishop Nikodim has assisted Metropolitan Nikolai in the Foreign Department of the Patriarchate. He will now become the head of this important Department.

Bishop Michael resigns from his post

Bishop Michael of Orenburg and Buzuluk (formerly Bishop of Smolensk) has been granted permission to resign from his post following a letter he had addressed to the Holy Synod asking for dispensation. Bishop Michael was a member of the delegation headed by Metropolitan Nikolai of Krutitsi and Kolomna which met with leading personalities of the World Council of Churches at Utrecht, Holland, in 1958.

Looking back at the beginning of a new semester

In the summer of 1960, as usual, a number of graduates left the theological seminaries of the Russian Orthodox Church of Moscow (Troitse-Sergieva Lavra in Zagorsk near Moscow), Leningrad, Odessa, Minsk and Lutsk (Volhynia) to enter the service of the Church. They are graduates of the theological seminaries in those cities as well as of the theological academies in Moscow and Leningrad.

The exact number was not published because some seminarists, who have been recommended by the Church for further studies will continue their theological education at the academies.

At the end-of-term ceremonies graduates who are now starting practical service in the Church were admonished "to undertake honest service for their Church and for their country" (Prof. K.I. Rushitzky, Zagorsk).

Some of the graduates of the Moscow academy will become teachers at the theological seminary at Zagorsk. After the certificates had been presented to the "cand. theol." (the next grade is "magister theol." and only after longer specialisation the "Dr. theol.") and copies of liturgical books, as well as the latest volume of sermons of Metropolitan Nikolai of Krutitsi and Kolomna, had been handed to the young aspirants to the priesthood, some of the young men rose to thank His Holiness, Patriarch Alexei, for his fatherly understanding and his keen interest in the life of the theological schools.

The speakers included theological students from the autocephalous Orthodox churches of Antioch, Rumania and Georgia (Grusia), who stressed "the importance of their studies at Moscow theological faculty, that ancient centre of theological education of the Eastern Churches". They said, the opportunities provided for Orthodox students from other churches to study in Moscow have strengthened the traditional brotherly ties existing between theologians and church workers in the Orthodox church and have contributed greatly to a closer fellowship between the autocephalous Orthodox churches.

Graduates of the theological academy in Leningrad were urged by their Dean, Protopriest M. Speransky, to maintain "strict self-discipline" in their future life as clergymen "in order to set an example to their church members", "to trust in God's almighty will in patience and confidence, to stand firm amidst all the storms of life and never to lose their living faith in God."

Here, too, it was stressed that the fulfilment of their pastoral duties within the Russian Orthodox Church is closely bound up with true patriotism and an active struggle for peace. "The problem of peace is a matter which all the clergy should have at heart, as they are all messengers of peace."

The inspector at the theological academy in Leningrad, Professor L.L. Pariisky, ended his speech with a quotation from one of Patriarch Alexei's addresses: "If all of us contribute to the world's welfare by a healthy way of thinking, true feelings, fruitful striving and just action, then we have done everything necessary to promote peace among the nations and among men."

At Odessa, graduates of the theological seminary also received liturgical books, and the best students were presented with a New Testament with psalms published by the Moscow Patriarchate.

It was the twelfth year that graduation day was celebrated at the seminary of Minsk.

At Lutsk, the Dean pointed out "that the four years' study had been primarily theoretical and that students received marks for their work on paper"... "You students are now beginning your practical education where God, the Church and the people will judge your achievements." Teachers at the seminar would be very pleased if their pupils received good marks for their work in the Church. In the eyes of the people and of the Church they were now set on a candlestick and not under a bushel and must point the way to salvation for all good men through their own pure lives. (Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, No. 7, 1960)

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CHURCH NEWS : CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Message from the Third Christian Peace Conference at Prague

The third World Peace Conference took place at Prague, the Czechoslovakian capital, this September. It was attended by more than 200 churchmen and theologians from 27 different countries. Delegates included those from the Orthodox and Protestant churches in the Socialist states of Europe as well as from the World Presbyterian Alliance, the British Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches, etc. As many as 31 Metropolitans, Archbishops, Bishops and church elders, headed by Patriarch Efrem, leader of the Georgian (Grusinian) Orthodox Church, took part in the discussions. A total of 38 professors of theology had come to Prague from different churches.

The conference dealt with the following main themes:

- 1) an era of peace for mankind
- 2) preparations for an all-Christian peace conference
- 3) the cold war
- 4) peace and justice.

The entire work of the conference was directed to the aim outlined in the main theme of the conference "Preparing for an era of peace for mankind".

The discussions culminated in the proclamation of the following message headed "Peace for the World after all" and the drafting of a letter to the World Council of Churches.

Message of the Conference: Peace will prevail!

"The Third Session of the Prague Christian Peace Conference took place in a world situation the dangerous tensions of which no realistically thinking man can deny.

"The failure of the summit meeting upon which so many people had set their hopes further increased the threat of a suicidal atomic war. None of us can say how much time there is left to eliminate this danger. More and more - worse than ever before - the cold war which inescapably leads to a hot war is poisoning the atmosphere. And instead of standing up unanimously for endangered and intimidated mankind the Church displays a picture of inner disunion, caused frequently by false alliances with secular power systems.

"In this situation, in the community of service in which we are united by our common faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, and in the bond of peace, we declare as a challenge and as a warning:

"The whole of mankind should unite in an active protest against all mass-destruction weapons by which the mercy of God is defamed and man and all creatures are betrayed.

"No Christian should take part in an atomic war or in its preparation.

"All Christians are summoned to do everything in their power to outlaw war, because this has become indispensable in the interest of mankind.

"We therefore urge all statesmen in the interest of the future of man and in their full responsibility for reconciliation and understanding between all nations to do all they can to carry out the basic points of the resolution unanimously agreed upon in the Fourteenth General Assembly of the United Nations i.e. to accomplish total disarmament and to eliminate for ever the methods of cold or hot war as a means of policy, to solve by agreement the German problem and the problems of certain parts of Asia and Africa, in order to create thereby the foundations for permanent peace for all nations.

"In solidarity with the people of mankind that longs for peace, brotherhood, and co-existence we are looking forward to the forthcoming General Assembly of the United Nations. We shall pray for all statesmen - no matter who they are - that the Lord of peace may bless their work for peace.

"It is our task to oppose the cold war, to create mutual confidence as the presupposition for real peace, and to stand up for every man whenever he is ill-used for the purpose of gaining power.

"Even in a newly organised society we as Christians are free to render to our fellow-man and to the human community the service we owe our neighbour.

"We also think it necessary that in the future the 650 million people of the People's Republic of China should be represented in the United Nations.

"We are especially summoned to stand up for the hungry and oppressed in the under-developed countries so that they may feel part of a brotherly community where all share the same rights and privileges.

"It is our task to bear witness to the truth of the living God, the holy love of whom embraces Christians and non-Christians alike.

"In a view of a wide spread attitude within Christendom we earnestly declare: Everyone who identifies Christianity with anti-communism promotes that crusade ideology which is strictly opposed to the cross of Him who was crucified and who has risen for all human beings.

"We shall never win peace, if we do not dare to meet each other, to speak to one another, to esteem and love each other instead of condemning each other as representatives of opposed ideologies and power systems.

"As we know that God's promises are extended to all of us in our common need, we summon all Christians to share in the task of the ecumenical movement and to join us in our work for peace in an All-Christian Peace Assembly and so to praise our Lord, the Prince of Peace.

"Oh, do not be so slow, dear Brethren, the world is crying out for peace!"

Letter to the World Council of Churches

"Dear Brethren,

In the name of all participants in the Third Assembly of the Prague Christian Peace Conference, we take the liberty to submit to the World Council of Churches the message and the resolutions agreed upon by the plenary session held on September 9th, 1960, which are to be presented to all churches in the world and to the public.

"At the same time, to create a better understanding of the enclosed documents we would like to submit to the World Council of Churches the following points asking for its brotherly acceptance:

"1) The overwhelming urgency of the question of peace which is actually the question of the future life of mankind induced us to convene the planned All-Christian Peace Assembly for June 1961. We extend a preliminary invitation to the World Council of Churches and all its member churches to take part in this conference. We would like to ask the World Council of Churches to support in every way this conference which will unite Christians and churches that belong to the World Council of Churches as well as those who are not among its members in the responsibility of all Christians for peace. We are grateful for the ever-growing friendly attention various committees and personalities of the World Council of Churches pay our endeavours. We also gratefully acknowledge that the World Council of Churches in many ways stressed the responsibility of Christians in overcoming cold war.

"2) We are convinced that the All-Christian Peace Assembly has got to support these efforts in a decisive way. If asked, why we are convening this conference only a few months before the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches meets in New Delhi, we would like to point out that the answer lies in the extraordinary urgency of the question of peace. The danger is growing hourly that one day we shall be confronted with a "too late". We do not want to interfere with the preparatory work for New Delhi in its specific complexity and therefore think that in dealing diligently and responsibly with the issue of peace at a special conference we can show our loyalty to the New Delhi programme. We believe that this division of work is also in the interest of New Delhi.

"3) The third plenary session of the Christian Peace Conference tried to discern that steps towards peace must be taken in our present situation.

"With consternation we had to admit that the cold war had affected international relations more seriously than we had thought. We recognized that there were only too many divergent tendencies which prevented the agreement of the leading statesmen on a programme for actual disarmament, for lasting peace and for sincere co-operation between all nations without regard to their respective social and political systems. We had to admit that also in the sphere of the Christian churches cold war darkened and endangered the clearness and simplicity of the proclamation of the commandments of Jesus Christ: love, mercy and peace. We confess our guilt in the weakness of our witness. But at the same time we are aware of the challenge of the crucified and risen Lord to devote all our activities to the service of peace, reconciliation and a peaceful life together. The task of Christendom is not to be a servant of this or that political bloc: the Gospel as the word of God brings its message of the love of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, to the people in the West as well as to those in the East or wherever they may live. Christians and non-Christians are equally threatened by the danger of a possible world catastrophe and by the results of hatred and cold war.

"We do not under-estimate the differences between the existing systems of society and we know that their competition cannot be run without tensions, upheavals and crises. Yet we also know as well that the advantages and the value of the competing systems can only be proved by self-sacrificing work, by greater freedom and social justice, by sincere love towards all men and by a peaceful competition in the battle with starvation and death. The fight against hunger, disease, cultural under-development, low standards of living and exploitation should be the positive task of competition in the world.

"This responsibility for peace leads us to point out clearly the danger of present-day world politics and to define them openly.

"We gratefully acknowledge the numerous pronouncements of different churches against mass-destruction weapons, but there is still no unanimous pronouncement that no Christian should take part in an atomic war or its preparations. We gratefully listened to the warnings from Christians and non-Christians against a new war. Yet a unanimous witness of all Christendom that in our days even the preparation of war represents an attack on God's creation and that the Christian's attitude towards war can only be an unreserved no, is still lacking.

"We are aware of the fact that in the political field Christian and non-Christian statesmen try to overcome the existing tensions. But we do not see that these endeavours lead to actual success. Therefore we think it our duty as Christians to address all statesmen encouraging them to deal with these difficult problems with perspicacy and wisdom. International conferences could help in a decisive way. We acknowledge with gratitude the efforts of the Commission for International Affairs of the World Council of Churches. We learned with pleasure that for example the last meeting of the main committees of the World Council of Churches raised the claim that all nations should have their place in the community of peoples each having the same rights regardless of their actual status so that the 650 million people of the People's Republic of China should have their full share in the common work for mutual understanding and peace. In the same way quicker and more efficient resolutions should be taken by the international political institutions in order to settle the problems of a final and total disarmament, of the removal of military bases in foreign territories, of the German problem and of the difficulties which have arisen in certain parts of Asia and Africa. We would like to express our readiness to co-operate in all these matters with the respective departments of the World Council of Churches.

"We hope that this statement clearly explains what from our point of view is the task of the All-Christian Peace Assembly, i.e. we want to reach a common agreement about the burning problems of mankind and so serve the cause of peace and life. It is our conviction that all our endeavours along this line - which stood also at the beginning of the ecumenical movement for active Christianity - will be an important contribution to the real unity of the Church. For the real unity of the Church always stands in correlation with the sincere and true witness of the Church.

"Jesus Christ conquered evil, hatred and death. The certain belief in this victory will strengthen our hearts in the battle for peace of the world and in giving an effective witness to Him who Himself is the Peace of the world."

signed: Viktor Hajek, D.D., President of the Christian Peace Conference
Jaroslav N. Ondra, General Secretary of the Christian Peace
Conference
Prof. J.L. Hromadka, D.D., Chairman, Working Committee of the
Christian Peace Conference

The Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches will consider this letter at its next meeting.

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C H U R C H N E W S : H U N G A R Y

Hungarian Churches represented at the Central Committee Meeting of the World Council of Churches at St. Andrews, Scotland

"At the Central Committee meeting of the World Council of Churches at St. Andrews, Scotland, on August 16th - 24th the Hungarian churches were represented by Bishop Dr. Tibor Bartha, President of the General Synod of the Reformed Church and Chairman of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, Bishop Zoltan Kaldy, of the Lutheran Church, and Pastor Gyula Muraközy, of the Reformed Church, General Secretary of the Hungarian Ecumenical Council. The delegates were gratified by the interest taken by the Russian Orthodox Church in the affairs of the meeting as indicated by the presence of its observers. They considered as worthy of special notice the brotherly message addressed to the meeting by Patriarch Alexei. They appreciated the steps taken by the World Council of Churches to alleviate the South African situation, the visit of the World Council's delegation to the churches in the Soviet Union, as described in the report of the Executive Committee. The Hungarian delegates gave keen yet not over-optimistic attention to the report and statements on the relation between the World Council of Churches, with its member churches, and the Roman Catholic Church. The Hungarian Churches admit the usefulness of all such dialogues with Roman Catholicism which are designed to promote the unity given in the Lord Jesus Christ, but reject all attempts which in the framework of a false and utterly un-Evangelical programme of a "United Christian Front" against the East, experiment with a rapprochement with political Catholicism. "With political Catholicism, whose designs are generally known, we do not want to cooperate" - writes Bishop Kaldy in his report published in the Lutheran Church weekly "Evangélikus Elet". With regard to the problem of population and family planning the delegation had previously declared, also in writing, that the immediate danger today is not the danger of over-population but the danger of atomic war which threatens the existence of the whole human race. It is this danger that we must do everything to avert. The delegation was especially gratified by the resolutions passed on China by the Commission on International Affairs, acting on a proposal by Professor Hromadka.

"Bishop Dr. Tibor Bartha (who conducted one of the evening devotions of the conference) stressed, in his reply to the report of the director of the CCIA that the Hungarian Protestant churches greatly appreciated all efforts to promote the peace of mankind, for they regarded the consolidation of peace as the central problem of mankind and, at the same time, as a question addressed to the churches. The two world wars brought immense sufferings upon the Hungarian people. Yet it was through these sufferings that God gave the gift of penitence to the Hungarian churches through which to learn anew the command of their Lord and the meaning of their mission. They gladly bear witness to the fact that they, by the grace of God, penetrate into an ever more intimate understanding of the secret of Christ's mission and the meaning of the Church's mission. They consider the Church's mission to lie in the responsibility for man. They hope that all the churches integrated in the World Council of Churches will accord serious attention to all the endeavours anywhere in world Christendom. The Christian Peace Conference of Prague is also motivated by an endeavour of this nature and 'this movement teaches our churches, as the fruit of the

work of God's Holy Spirit, to recognize and implement their responsibility for men' - said Bishop Bartha. Then he gave a detailed account of the aims and objectives of the Christian Peace Conference at Prague. He stated that all the churches and churchmen participating in the Christian Peace Conference at Prague greatly appreciate the work of the World Council of Churches as well as that of the other international church organisations. The movement of the Christian Peace Conference at Prague for us in no way challenges the *raison d'être* or minimizes the importance of these organisations. On the contrary, the Christian Peace Conference at Prague wishes to help the work of all the churches and church organisations inasmuch as they want to concentrate public attention on the concrete and decisive task of averting war.

"Bishop Kaldy spoke on the last day of the meeting about the relation between the churches of the East and West. He pointed out that in a world marked by social, political and ideological tensions, the churches themselves, in more than one instance, have succumbed to the temptations caused by the general lack of confidence. 'In this situation - said the Bishop - we must do everything in our means to promote the reconciliation of the divided world. Above all, we must strongly grasp the truth that there is the one Christian Church. There is neither East nor West in Christ. Let us regard each other as brethren who belong to the same Church, though led by God in different paths. Let us fight against the cold war both within and outside the church, particularly as far as church papers are concerned. Let the World Council of Churches actually be the place of a truly ecumenical dialogue, in the way proposed also by Professor Hromadka at the Rhodes meeting. Greater effort should be made in theological work to draw more upon the work of theologians living in the Eastern world. When we work for the unity of the churches, then we contribute to the work of promoting peaceful co-existence so much needed by humanity' - was the conclusion of the speech of Bishop Kaldy."

(Hungarian Church Press, October 1st, 1960)

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CHURCH NEWS : YUGOSLAVIA

The Serbian Orthodox Church

Since the enthronement of the new Supreme Patriarch, Hermann, as head of the Serbian Orthodox Church on the 29th May, 1960, in Belgrade, his church has been referred to in the Yugoslav daily press as "the Church of Yugoslavia". Patriarch Hermann, who has retained the title of Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, was received by President Tito at the end of June in Brioni, after a long visit to the frontier-districts of Yugoslavia.

The Serbian Orthodox Church has many members all over Yugoslavia, especially in Serbia where it was born, but also in Macedonia. The latter were recently given the right^{to} use the Macedonian language in their services (this is a dialect spoken in the area between Serbia and Bulgaria). This gesture shows that the Serbian Orthodox Church recognises its responsibility for all the Orthodox Christians in Yugoslavia.

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ATHEIST PROPAGANDA IN THE U.S.S.R.

"Why don't the schools take action?"

A Communist work-brigade consisting of 5 men and 2 women attached to the "Stankolit" factory recently sent a letter to E.I. Afanassenko, Minister of Education for the USSR. The letter is published in "Nauka i Religia" (9th September, 1960), together with the Minister's reply. The column bears the heading "Why don't the schools take action?"

This correspondence is important because it raises and answers a question which is characteristic of the religious situation in the Soviet Union today.

The letter asks the Minister of Education whether the Soviet school is neutral towards religion, or whether it is an institution for training future atheists and active materialists worthy of Communist society. The question and the answer are reproduced here word for word (in English translation):

Question: Why don't the schools take action?

"Dear Comrade Minister. Articles and reports are becoming more and more frequent in the Soviet press, and give rise to serious anxiety. They state that the Tsarkovniki (church people) are getting hold of children and adolescents and drawing them into the net of religion. We have read about it in 'Komsomol'skaia Pravda', 'Moskovsky Komsomoletz', 'Vetshernaia Moskva' and other papers which have all published articles entitled 'Chameleon', 'Father, Mother and the can of Holy Water', 'Surrender without a struggle', etc.

"Why this surrender without a struggle?

"'Komsomol'skaia Pravda' published a story about a young mother who forces her ten-year-old son, Shenja Moisseev, to believe in God. The boy was sent from his home in Sysran to the Troitse-Sergievo Lavra of the Russian Orthodox Church at Zagorsk, near Moscow, in order to purchase holy water, oil for the lamps which are burned in front of the icons, consecrated bread, etc., with the assistance of 'some pious old women'. Shenja Moisseev was put down into the fourth class at school, and his sister Liuda into the sixth class. Neither of the children belong to the Pioneer Youth Association.

"Their father is a machine-worker and an atheist like ourselves.

"The 'Komsomol'skaia Pravda' rightly blames him for not insisting that his children be brought up in a healthy way.

"The accusation is justified. But why did he have to face the struggle with the chimera alone? He was opposed by quite a formidable array of people: his wife who had been besotted by the 'holy fathers', the priests themselves, and a set of bigoted women with cans of holy water. Is Shenja Moisseev only the son of his parents and only a member of his own family? Is he not also a son of the socialist motherland, and a member of the Soviet collective?

"Where was the school? That's what we are asking, Comrade Minister.

"'Komsomol'skaia Pravda' tells another story, this time about Sacha Turkin.

"When Sacha was to be taken into the Komsomol, he stated that he believed in God. This came as a complete surprise both to his class-mates (with whom he had been to school for ten years) and to the teachers at School Number 147 in Moscow. None of them had the slightest idea that Sacha's father was a religious fanatic, who read the Bible to his son before he went to bed, so as to turn Sacha into a fanatic like himself.

"We have therefore two entirely different cases before us.

"Shenia Moisseev's father is a convinced atheist. Sacha Turkin's father is a believer.

"In the first case the son is the victim of his parents' passivity and inconsistency. In the second case the boy is the victim of his fanatical father's obstinacy.

"But one thing is clear. In both cases hardly any influence was exercised by the school, which is the most important force in the collective and exists in order to develop a healthy atheist view of life in our children.

"The paper 'Moskovski Komsomolets' contains an article entitled 'Surrender without a struggle' about a pupil at the Central School in Lianosov, called Jurii Karpukhin. Ever since he was in the second class the boy had attended church regularly, three kilometres away. Jurii was not a member of the (Communist) pioneer association, and no attempt had yet been made to draw him into the Komsomol. His teacher, the physics instructress, was unable to convince him of the validity of atheism. She did not even try, with the help of physics (which is her own subject) to prove that the existence of God is a myth and a fallacy. Other people persuaded the boy to the contrary, in a consistent campaign. Every day, year in year out Father Seraphim, the local priest, instructed his young pupil, Jurii. And he achieved what he wanted to. When Karbukhin reached the tenth class, at Easter time he was solemnly dedicated for service in the church. And his school read in the newspaper that Jurii Karbukhin had entered a religious seminary!

"The walls of a monastery enclose other things besides museum-exhibits. Behind the stone walls, in silent monks' cells, are concealed feeble-minded idlers, who were, however, once respected members of the community. Where do they come from, these well-fed 'martyrs of the faith' who are so assiduous in kissing the icons?

"If one looks at them more closely - those who have not completely renounced the world - it is difficult to believe that they really regard earthly life as an unattractive affair, and death as the road to eternal happiness. They too have attended our Soviet schools. How could it happen that our schools have simply overlooked them? We can understand that the Church is more active today than ever before. Supersonic planes, nuclear ice-breaking machines, the cosmic rockets, the electronic microscope and the automatising of industry - all this has been invented by Soviet atheists. There is not the slightest opportunity left for God to perform a decent miracle. The Tserkovniki (church-people) feel the ground crumbling under their feet, that is why they are so frightened.

"But does that mean that we should just look on indifferently, while they hunt the souls of our people?

"Comrade Minister. We members of the Communist work-brigade have decided to appeal to you, because we don't think we have the right to remain indifferent about the things described above. We are deeply concerned about the fate of our comrades who are separated from us by monastery walls, and especially about those who may find themselves behind those walls in the future owing to our negligence. We are building up a new Communist order of society. We therefore cannot remain indifferent about the people who live with us in that society. We want the motto of our brigade, 'Live and work Communistically!' to be the motto of everyone, so that our children may equip themselves for an honest life.

"Have our schools done everything they could? Are they prepared to change their attitude from one of neutrality in religious education to an active struggle to bring children up as real atheists, active materialists, worthy members of the future Communist society?"

Reply from the Minister of Education

"After carefully considering your letter, 'Why don't the schools take action?' I have come to the conclusion that you are perfectly right in pointing out the need for strengthening the teaching of scientific atheism in the schools.

"Unfortunately the influence of the 'Religiosniki' (religious people) on school-children is still considerable. Serious efforts must be made to combat this influence.

"Today, when education is being directed to fresh aims, and the schools are being brought into closer touch with the life, work and practice of Communism, this provides the most favourable basis for forming the Marxist-Leninist ideology and a deep sense of responsibility for Communism among school-children. If every school makes use of these opportunities it will ensure that its pupils adopt the ideology of materialist Communism, that they understand the policy of the Party, and that they give it active support.

"The Ministry of Education in the USSR has already taken measures to improve the education of school-children in atheism. Already in February 1959 the Ministry of Education sent a circular letter to the educational bodies and heads of schools, telling them to examine the question of the anti-religious education of school-children at their teachers' meetings, and to work out practical suggestions for improving it. The teachers were especially urged, in educating their pupils to pay every attention to giving them a thorough grounding in Marxist-Leninist ideology. We recommend teachers to make use of every opportunity of unmasking any religious ideas which are unscientific and harmful.

"They must give clear, tangible facts to illustrate the harmfulness of religion. Their teaching must not on any account take the form of loud, unscientific, blind criticism of religious teachings and views.

"The schools also have the task of seizing opportunities for education outside the school-room, enlisting the cooperation of the pioneer associations and the Komsomol, organising courses for reading the most interesting popular books on science, arranging evening demonstrations of experiments in chemistry and physics, showing films on general scientific subjects, and so on.

"The circular letter urged the directors of schools and the educational organisers and inspectors to pay attention to anti-religious instruction in schools, and to give practical help to the teachers.

"The Ministry recommended teachers and others engaged in educational work to arrange scientific atheist propaganda, lectures at parents' meetings in the schools, broadcasts, 'Brains Trust' evenings, etc., drawing in the help of business enterprises, Kolchoses and Sovkoses. These instructions are still in full force.

"In a paper relating to the new school syllabus certain recommendations are added, such as how materials can be obtained for education in scientific atheism. It points out, for instance, that the physics lesson in secondary schools presents an opportunity for the teacher to train his pupils' concepts of the material world. Explanation of the essential laws of physics, of the electric phenomena in the atmosphere like lightning and thunder, of the reasons for eclipses of the sun and the moon, descriptions of space-rockets and other outstanding achievements of Soviet science, provide concrete material for instructing school-children in scientific atheism.

"The chemistry syllabus is drawn up in such a way that it reveals the deep underlying mysteries of nature. The school lessons in chemistry must explain chemical phenomena which were formerly believed to be miraculous. The teacher must show that today we can not only foresee such phenomena but also control them. The courses on biology, botany, zoology, anatomy and physiology, together with elementary studies in Darwin's theory of evolution, will help to give school-children a scientific-atheist understanding of nature. Darwinism is a special subject on the curriculum; it includes the origin and development of life on earth.

"The lessons in history, literature, etc. provide plenty of material for training in atheism. In the highest form of the secondary schools a new subject has been introduced: Bases of political knowledge. In order to prepare future teachers more thoroughly, the new syllabus of the teachers' training colleges includes an optional course on 'The bases of atheism'. In addition the students at the training colleges will study the forms and methods of scientific atheist education. For instructing young people in atheism a bibliography will be useful, which has been published by the publishers of the Ministry of Education responsible for educational books. In 1959/60 it published, or prepared to publish, the following books:

S.S. El'manovitsh:	'Education in scientific atheism in the physics lesson'
M.I. Golenkin:	'Victors in the struggle for existence'
W.A. Shishakov:	'How to teach astronomy'
E.A. Veselov:	'Darwinism'
W.S. Matveev:	'The puzzling element in the human psyche'
M.W. Skvorzov (editor)	'Questions of educating for atheism in schools'
I.N. Meshtsheriakova:	'The rise of religion and the struggle of science against religion'
A.M. Krasnousov:	'Russian authors in the struggle against the church and religion'

The Detgiz edition (for books for young people) has published:

G. Anfilov: 'Artificial suns'
G. Tikhov: 'Sixty years with the telescope'
F. Bubleinikov: 'The mystery of technics and the laws of nature'
and others

"Concerning the methods and experience in educating school-children in scientific atheism, special pamphlets are published by the Ministry of Education. ('Physics in Schools', 'History in Schools', and others)

"The syllabus for courses on improving the quality of teaching includes special subjects which will be studied by teachers in all branches.

"Many of the leading schools have already achieved a serious improvement in the teaching of atheism. Reports on this were given at the latest All-Russian conference for teachers. But in many schools education in atheism is still merely a formality. The head teachers and educational authorities find it a difficult subject to deal with. The teachers make very little use of the opportunities for different forms of group work, and the atheist activities outside the schools, and do not give adequate help to the pioneer associations or the Komsomol groups.

"The anti-religious propaganda outside the schools is also weak; it should influence parents, the local people, the activities for children outside school, etc.

"This situation is causing grave anxiety to the Ministry of Education. We have therefore arranged for efficient local control of the anti-religious education in the schools at the beginning of the new school year. The outcome of these enquiries will show what further measures will have to be taken in order to improve the education of school-children in atheism."

Active Propaganda

(according to 'Partinaia Jisn', No 17, September 1960, an official Party paper)

In the 'Progress' kolkhose there are workers from the Ukraine, Russians and others from Moldavia, in the 'Lenin' kolkhose there are Ukrainians, Moldavians, Bulgarians and Gagauses. Old-timers still remember the Rumanian feudal rule, when there were constant differences and conflicts between these nationalities. Today all that belongs to the past. A decisive factor was the liquidation "of the exploitation of man by man and equally the inflexible attitude of the kolchoso party organisations in the face of any rekindling of bourgeois nationalism." It meant that "workers were educated in a spirit of international friendship and proletarian internationalism."

These efforts of the party organs still occupy a predominant position in their campaign for cultural enlightenment.

"Some of our kolchoso members, however, still cling to religious prejudices. Many Baptists still take very little part in collective work."

In the village of Shevtchenkovo the most active Baptists started a campaign in favour of their sect. The party leaders were alarmed and immediately responded with reinforced atheist propaganda in the form of regular lectures, showing of scientific-atheist films, personal talks with the kolkchöse members, etc.

An atheist evening was organised at the House of Culture, which aroused considerable interest. "The 600-seat hall was crowded ... The introductory lecture was followed by a demonstration of practical experiments in physics given by a woman-teacher, comrade Kritzgo, to prove the non-existence of 'miracles'. Rounding up the evening comrade Kolesnitshenko explained why he had left the Baptist sect. The audience was deeply impressed by his comments."

Atheist propaganda, he said, "is assuming an increasingly aggressive character" in this part of Southern Russia. In less than a year 30 people have left the Baptist congregation, and church attendance is steadily diminishing. In the village of Furmanak the church had to be closed, since nobody was attending services. A young priest who had just come out of theological seminary recently started preaching in the church of Novossiolsk. "But he had to realise that hardly anyone among the inhabitants needed his services any longer. He settled down in Ismail, where he is now working as a photographer."

What happens to the money given by churchgoers?

A discussion with churchgoers (a "Besseda") on the above question claims to prove that church-leaders (in this case those of the Russian Orthodox Church) are mainly interested in money, which is quite contrary to their spiritual task.

Before answering the question, "What happens to the money given by churchgoers?", 'Nauka i Religia' (September 1960) describes an unusual event which happened recently:

"Not long ago the Soviet Union received a visit from a delegation of the World Council of Churches. Eminent members of the clergy came to our country in order to inform themselves about the life of the Russian Orthodox Church and the activities of different sects. One of the delegates, Rev. Francis House, the Associate General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, published his impressions on his return to England. There is nothing unusual about that. But some extraordinary information was divulged by him.

"Without the slightest difficulty this English clergyman had succeeded in finding out 'secrets' (!) about the Orthodox Church, of which the Russian people had so far no idea.

"Mr. House states that church-people (Tserkovniki) abroad will be surprised to learn that in the Soviet Union no one prevents the believers from attending church. The churches are in an excellent state, the costly vestments of the priests are resplendent, and the choir-singing is wonderful. But then the Englishman divulges a 'secret'.

"'I once asked a Russian Bishop', writes Mr. House, 'what his biggest problem was.' The Bishop replied, 'We have too much money. The people are most generous in giving to the Church. We use this money to maintain our churches, to decorate them and to pay the salaries of the priests. But we can't spend all the money. This situation creates many problems and leads to all kinds of temptations.'

"Mr. House has divulged a 'secret' which the Russian Bishops only tell to foreigners, and never disclose to their own church-members: the Church has a surplus of money that it doesn't know what to do with. And where there is a lot of money, the devil is always at work, as the Church itself teaches. It is a temptation to the 'Holy Fathers' to commit all kinds of sins; in other words, the over-generous gifts (of the church-members) may be pleasing to God, but it is really the devil who uses them. That is the only construction that can be put upon the facts divulged by the Orthodox Bishop to the English clergyman.

"Rev. Francis House does not give the name of the Bishop who spoke so frankly to him. And in any case, it is of no importance. It may have been any of the Bishops except the clergymen (in the Baltic districts, for instance) who receive subsidies from the Orthodox Church at the expense of the rich dioceses."

(Editor's note:

Mr. House's article was not an official report as a representative of the World Council of Churches, but a personal account of some impressions of the life of the churches in the USSR. The conversation with the Bishop referred to did not take place during the World Council of Churches' visit to the USSR.)

This story confirms that the Church makes a charge for the various official services it performs (baptisms, weddings, etc.), and that the prices are fixed by the Church, not by the church-goers. A letter from one church-goer states "that a short service of thanksgiving or intercession in the cemetery costs 25 roubles, but if the priest has to walk 25 steps to the grave he gets 50 roubles. He gets a rouble for every step that he takes. If the amount demanded is too high, the church-goer has only one alternative: either to refuse or to pay. But refusal means committing a sin, so they have to pay."

The sale of candles also brings enormous sums of money into the Church. "The cost of producing a candle which is sold for 3, 5 or 10 roubles is only 6 - 28 copeks. In the little town of Roslavl' last year candles were sold to the total value of 130,000 roubles, for which the Church had paid less than 5,000 roubles.

These facts are vouched for by the former priest of Barnaul who stated in writing that a baptism involves purchasing at least 5 candles: 3 to be placed on the font and one for each of the godparents. He writes, "Dozens of children are brought to be baptised on Sundays in Barnaul. On the font three candles are lit when the first child is baptised, and they go on burning, so that the other candles can be packed in afterwards. In this way hundreds of candles are sold not once, but over and over again. The Church receives anything up to 50 roubles for a candle which cost only 15 copeks to produce."

This is confirmed by Kuzin, formerly a priest: "A candle which costs between 3 and 5 roubles is sold ten times over." In this way "the priests not only deceive the church-goers, but also the God whom they worship" (remarks "Nauka i Religia"). It continues: "We do not wish to interfere in the internal affairs of the Church. It is the church-people's own business, at what price they sell their candles." A few years ago a group of workers (Artel') which manufactured candles began to sell its products to state shops, where they were sold much more cheaply than in the Church. "So far so good. But the clergy protested violently, because it meant a loss to their exchequer. The church-goers were informed from the pulpit that candles purchased in state-shops were not to be placed in the church candlesticks, because they had not been consecrated (so there was no sanctity in them)."

Before Peter the Great anyone could produce candles, and they were all regarded as "holy", until in 1720 the Czar "granted the Church the monopoly for producing them". When the monopoly was withdrawn thirty years later, "the income of the priests dried up" (wrote Archbishop Philaret of Tshernigov); "he says nothing about the candles being holy, he only speaks of the Church's income."

Today "the Church has re-introduced its right of monopoly for the sale of candles." That too "is the business of the Church and of church-goers." But "the church-goers are rightly surprised at the appetite of the clergy."

The Church gets a lot of money out of church-goers (continues "Nauka i Religia"), "probably more than the regulations of the Church permit." The "Nomokanon" (anthology of ordinances laid down by the apostles, which are still in force) states that "no priest of any rank may deal in commercial affairs, otherwise he must be dismissed"... "But the priests don't pay much attention to this ordinance laid down by the apostles. Church-goers will not start making trouble about the sale of candles, because they regard that as a sin. So they pay the price demanded."

The journal then refers to Jesus Christ "the mythical founder of the Christian faith" and relates how he drove the merchants and money-changers out of the temple (John 2:13-15), quoting the exact chapter and verse.

"The merchants and money-changers in the Church today don't like this story. They try to ignore the commandment of the Bible that one cannot serve both God and Mammon. They obstinately persist in serving both at once. And it doesn't worry the priests that the church-goers have to earn their money first, which is not always easy ... The priests who perform religious services are the only class of people in the USSR who are not doing any useful work in Soviet society. The great mass of church-goers consists of pensioners, Kolchose-workers, factory-workers and employees. The portion of their income which they put in the church's collection-box means depriving the family of it, just because one member thinks that money given to the Church serves a divine purpose. In actual fact this money is used for their own purposes by the priests, who live in grand style. Their excesses (drunkenness, etc.) are a public scandal ... When the Bishops' pockets are well-lined they change to another diocese, and the local priests are moved to other parish-churches." Examples of this are given by former priests, like N. Spassky from the Stalingrad district, "who accepted bribes from his subordinates and agreed not to report to the Patriarch about their behaviour."

Konstantin Pokov, Bishop of Kalinin, was moved to Alma Ata owing to a scandal, but he had to leave this town too after he had thoroughly fleeced his parishioners (wrote "Kazakhstanskaia Prawda"). "He flew to Moscow taking with him 354,000 roubles which belonged to the Church". It also mentions S. Larin, Bishop of Tula, "who appropriated 75,000 roubles belonging to the members of the parish of Tula". He "was appointed Bishop of Stalin-grad and Astrachan, purchased a house for himself for 250,000 roubles, and surrounded himself with adoptive daughters, nieces and other female relations, whom the monk Valent found for him. At the receptions (drinking-binges) given by the Bishop things went so far that he had to be moved again. Today he is Bishop of Omsk (in Siberia)."

The article "What happens to the money given by church-goers?" closes with the following remark: "The laws of the Church stipulate that any Bishop or priest found guilty of theft, drunkenness or huckstering must be dismissed from his position. Why don't the 'Tserkovniki' (church-goers) keep this ordinance? The answer is quite simple: if every priest who drinks, lives an undisciplined life or exploits his fellow-Christians were removed from his priestly office, there would be a considerable reduction in the numbers of clergy. And if the Archbishops and Bishops themselves live a dissolute life, then (as the saying goes) God has told the lower orders of the clergy not to lag behind."

An example of the moral degeneracy of the clergy, on which all the priests who have left the Church are unanimous, is given in the following story about P. Kuzin, formerly a priest in Leningrad. "After I had resigned from the priesthood and broken away from religion, one of my former colleagues at the Seminary, P. Bablov, an extremely fat priest, called to see me and asked me about my plans. He said, 'You could have saved some more money before you left and bought yourself a car. I should like to leave too, but one must have something out of life ...' Isn't this a typical case? Things have gone so far that the Church is no longer able to eradicate godlessness even among its own priests.'"

The philosophical crutches of theology

"Neo-thomism is the official philosophy of Catholicism". This is the statement which Professor B. Bykhovsky has taken as the basis of an article. It is published in "Nauka i Religia" (Moscow, No. 9, 1960), the monthly paper of the "Society for the propagation of political and scientific knowledge" in the section devoted to open consultations.

The fact that theology walks on philosophical crutches was explained already by Lenin: "Lenin taught that idealism always amounts in one way or another to the protection or promotion of religion. This refers to all the trends of contemporary idealism. Directly or indirectly they all justify and defend religious ideology, or at any rate pave the way for it, and leave some loop-holes for religion."

The struggle between the two camps in philosophy - materialism and idealism - has never been so sharp and intense as it is today. The growing influence of materialist philosophy demands extraordinary skill from the idealists in defending their tottering position, the professor writes.

Philosophical idealism has fallen into such disrepute, that none of its important branches calls itself idealistic any longer. "It is reminiscent of the evasions of those who defend capitalism, which has sunk so low in the eyes of the people today that its defenders are forced to put new labels on their obsolete social system and to describe capitalism as the régime of 'free enterprise' or 'general welfare' or something of that sort - anything to avoid calling it by its real name."

If one asks an existentialist or a pragmatist, a neo-positivist or a neo-thomist (to mention only the most important schools of philosophy) whether they are idealists they will all deny it quite definitely. "And yet they are all keen protagonists of contemporary philosophical idealism". This fact alone reveals how much the balance of power has changed between the two philosophical camps. "The materialists no longer need to hide their faces; it is now the idealists who have to conceal their convictions".

These general remarks of Bykhovsky are followed by a description of neo-thomism: "Neo-thomism, the official philosophy of the Roman Catholic Church, does not call itself a philosophy of idealism"; it prefers to sail under the false flag of 'realism'.

But neo-thomist 'realism' consists merely in denying the material unity of the world, and pretending that the spirit and the soul have a different origin, quite independent of the natural laws of matter. The adherents of neo-thomism "do not recognise the material, physical world as a given factor which is developing in accordance with its own laws." They say that it was created by the spirit of God. "This proves without a doubt that neo-thomist realism belongs to the idealist camp."

This trend differs from other idealistic schools of thought in that "neo-thomism frankly, unequivocally and directly regards the promotion of theology as its main task, namely the theology of the Roman Catholic Church. All the efforts of the neo-thomists are directed towards this end, i.e. that of providing philosophical support for the dogmas of the Catholic Church."

The aim of neo-thomism is to enlist reason in the service of its prejudices, "to subordinate philosophy to theology, and to make logical thought a tool for justifying senseless religious doctrines." According to this conception "philosophy is a servant of theology, and theology is the queen of philosophy."

The dark past

As shown by the prefix "neo", neo-thomism is a revival of the teaching of Thomas of Aquinas, a mediaeval scholastic theologian of the 13th century. In 1879 Pope Leo XIII declared his teaching to be the irrefutable philosophical dogma of Catholicism. "For 800 years the Roman Catholic Church has done everything possible to anchor this scholastic teaching in the consciousness of the people." The article continues:

"Thomas of Aquinas undoubtedly rendered a great service to the mediaeval Church. The renaissance of the wisdom of ancient Greek philosophy, which had fallen into oblivion under the influence of the Church, presented a menace to the monopoly-position of blind religious faith. Thomas realised the menace. He realised also that in this new situation the Church could not ignore philosophy, or simply pronounce it anathema; philosophy must be tamed and drawn into the service of Christianity. Thomas of Aquinas rendered a

great service to Catholicism by harnessing philosophy to the service of the Church and adapting it to religious requirements, instead of rejecting it outright. In doing so, of course, he distorted and deformed the teaching of Aristotle. As Herzen (a well-known revolutionary thinker and writer in Russia at the end of the 18th century) aptly remarked, Thomas of Aquinas "tensured" the head of ancient Greek thought!"

That was 700 years ago. "In the meantime knowledge has attained heights that were inconceivable even to the most brilliant minds of these bygone times. The philosophy of Aristotle and the scientific knowledge which it contained certainly do not carry as much weight as they did in the age of feudal darkness and lack of culture." In the light of modern scientific knowledge they strike us as extremely naïve and primitive. "And now for the second time this philosophy which Thomas of Aquinas created and clothed in monastic garb, is utilised by the Catholic Church as an ideological weapon in its struggle with the scientific view of life."

The suppression of reason

"Neo-thomist philosophy is indefatigable in stressing the need for an alliance between faith and reason, which are called to produce a harmony." The neo-thomists describe themselves as "fighters on two fronts in the struggle between fideism and (pure) rationalism."

Fideism is "the reactionary theory which puts faith before reason" (Lenin). Does this saying of Lenin's refer to neo-thomism? The answer was supplied by Pope Pius XII when on the 20th April 1941 he appealed to students "to place their reason at the service of their faith, because by forcing reason to its knees, faith gives it a higher place."

"Reason on its knees before faith - that is the true symbol of the neo-thomist harmony". If that is not fideism, then what is it? The defence of pure fideism by the Roman Catholic Church is therefore nothing other than the recognition that it is inexpedient and impossible to disregard philosophy, and that religion must be defended by logic and reason. "The Thomist philosophy which the Church uses for its own interests is made subject to theology. The neo-thomists even go so far as to condemn theologians who are afraid of philosophy."

Neo-thomism is fideism because it regards "theological dogma as the norm and criterion of truth". According to the neo-thomists, therefore, "philosophy must adapt itself to the dogmas of the Church." Philosophy, they say, "is acceptable only if it does not infringe theology."

Furthermore neo-thomism maintains that all truths are not perceptible by reason alone. They say, there are some truths which cannot be grasped rationally because (they say) they are beyond the scope of science and philosophy. Here human perception must bow to the authority of divine truth. "This means another victory of faith over reason."

The main theme of neo-thomist philosophy is "its insistence that thought must be carried on in humility and submission", instead of "pressing forward courageously and creatively." This completely curbs freedom of thought.

"The neo-thomists have aimed particularly at fighting rationalism. Thus reason must never defend opinions which are opposed to dogma; more than this, it must even represent such opinions as errors, because it is impossible to separate faith from reason. Here reason is subordinate to faith and under its control. Religion is always right and reason is always wrong. The dogmas of the Church are impregnable, and therefore must never be doubted or criticised.

"Neo-thomist philosophy condemns rationalism as a doctrine which recognises human reason as a means of discovering truth and thus rejects the divine revelation."

Two views of life are here opposed to one another. One is the scientific view (based on reason), which is convinced of the unlimited power of human reason. The other view (that defended by neo-thomist idealism) believes that a scientific view of life is inadequate and incomplete and that one must therefore revert to faith in Holy Scripture and to the interdictions of the Church, because the Scriptures are inspired by the divine wisdom which is the inviolable basis of religion.

The dead versus the living

The materialist view of life, whose aim is the eternal self-perfection of scientific knowledge, is therefore "obstructed by an ossified, dead dogmatism." Religion cannot enrich our scientific knowledge, for religious faith is helpless in face of the scientific discoveries we have made. "Fifty years hence this will be even clearer than it is today. For by that time science will have made such tremendous progress that our present achievements will appear very small in comparison."

"Neo-thomism teaches that truth lies behind us and must be sought in the past, not in the future." Compare the papal Encyclical "Humani Generis", which states that no truth discovered by human reason can be in contradiction with the truth already revealed. But supposing such contradictions do arise, what then? Are not these contradictions also truths, and must this truth then be condemned? The past wants to set itself up as a norm for the future, and to place shackles on everything that is new.

"Thus neo-thomism, even when it proudly describes itself as critical realism, is tied to dogma which claims to be the absolute norm. That is why neo-thomism is the sharpest, most active and insidious enemy of materialism ... There is no greater antagonism than that between reactionary fideism (i.e. the defence of religion at any price) and the logical atheist philosophy of materialism which leaves religion no room to grow rampant."

"New trends in Jewish-Christian theology"

"In our struggle against religion we must carefully study the manoeuvres resorted to by its protagonists today, and the arguments with which they support it. We must not lose sight of the fact that the Tserkovniki (church-people) still present their religious teachings to the broad masses of believers in the old traditional biblical form.

"But our criticism of religious ideology must be directed not only to its old traditional forms, derived from the direct exposition of the biblical mythos and of the Jewish-Christian dogmas, but also to the new, modern forms which are connected with the more bold manoeuvres of religious apologetics."

This point is made by I.A. Kryvelev, the well-known atheist propagandist in the USSR, in an article on "Some new trends in contemporary Jewish-Christian theology" (published in the Year-Book of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR on the history of religion and atheism, No. 7).

Among the present-day theologians, and Christian thinkers and writers interested in theology and anthropology in the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches, Kryvelev mentions P.B. Braithwaite (Cambridge), Karl Jaspers and R. Bultmann (Germany), Bishop L.S. Hunter (Sheffield), Antonio Romana and D. Montrone (both members of Jesuit Orders), C. Henry (USA), L. Berkhoff, E. Frank (England), A. Daudeyne (Louvain), Karl Barth (Switzerland) and A. Perego (Italy).

"There is a group of theologians and philosophical idealists", writes Kryvelev, "who (in the interest of religion) urge the need for radical changes in dogmatics, and want to perform a sort of surgical operation on the religious teachings of Christianity." They include Braithwaite and Bultmann ("The De-Mythologisation of Christianity"). "Bultmann may be more deeply understood by reading an article in which K. Jaspers criticises Bultmann's theology, and this criticism is also valuable for a true understanding of the position of contemporary theology as a whole."

Concerning Jaspers Kryvelev says that "Jaspers speaks very openly of the social-political, ideological situation today, and states that in his view it does not permit religion to abandon mythos." Jaspers devotes much thought to the struggle between freedom and totalitarianism, because in his view this controversy is bound up with the problem of the future fate of freedom. "Atheism is a force which is hostile to the free world, i.e. capitalism; yet the power of atheism is growing stronger and stronger." In face of this menace to the bourgeois world (says Jaspers) the theologians (instead of arguing with one another) should unite in the struggle against atheism and materialism, and against socialist ideology as a whole. In Jaspers' view, rejection of Bultmann's efforts to de-mythologise the Christian faith is one of the basic conditions for a successful struggle against what he arbitrarily calls "totalitarian" ideology having in view the philosophy of the dialectical and historical materialism. Jaspers admits "that Jewish-Christian dogma is based on myths." But he considers it "inadvisable to abandon those myths, and impossible for the reasons of expediency given above."

Furthermore Kryvelev wants to prove that his challenge to study contemporary Christian theology carefully applies to others besides Jaspers and Bultmann. According to Kryvelev, the many separate attempts at "theological reform" amount in practice to bringing Jewish-Christian theology up-to-date "in order to combat the spread of atheism."

The need for "reforming" theology is defended today (Bishop L.S. Hunter, Sheffield) by the fact "that religion and science must not ultimately contradict each other." The purpose of this "reform" of theology is to strengthen the "Weltbild" of Christians and to harmonise their religious concepts with the findings of science, just as Jewish religion and Greek science were harmonised in the past, "thus enabling the Early Church to win Europe for the Christian faith."

This "Weltbild" now belongs to the past (writes Kryvelev). "What is desirable today from the Christian point of view is a faith which welds the teaching of the Church and the achievements of modern science into a harmonious unity." For "the present confusion of thought is not merely an academic problem". It is "a social evil" (Hunter). "If the maintenance of religious faith is described as the most urgent of all social problems, this can only mean the salvation of capitalism" ... "Christian dogma will be revised ... but only where this is unavoidable in order to bring its ideas into line with modern science."

With regard to the archaic language of the Bible, (says Kryvelev) many people today, especially the Jesuits, maintain that "the Bible is purposely written in a language which is understood by everyone". The obscure esoteric language of the Bible, wrapped in legend and imagery, "has been chosen by the Holy Spirit in order to impart His message to mortal men, because most of them would have been unable to grasp scientific forms of expression." According to this, "God has not revealed a higher truth because it is beyond human comprehension ... By such paradoxical statements the theologians discredit God more than the atheists do, when they deny His existence altogether."

The theologians want to express the casuistry of the Bible story and its theological interpretation in a scientific way, so as to "create some sort of agreement between dogma and science" ... "The characteristic feature of this casuistry in Christian dogma is that it is quite impossible to prove it; religion arbitrarily insists on people simply believing what they are told, and not asking questions." "But the number of people who are prepared to believe blindly is rapidly decreasing." So theologians have to devise new ways "in order to rescue the sinking ship of Christian dogma."

The way in which all the theologians (whatever their confession) propose to reform Christian dogma is "to make a mystery of all the concepts connected with the creeds." This includes making a mystery of what the Church calls "rationalism" (Abelard, Dyonisius, Pseudoareopagitica, Bernard of Clairvaux and others). "But pure church rationalism always has been diffused with mysticism, already in the teaching of Thomas of Aquinas which is still valid in the Roman Catholic Church. And the Protestantism which reacted against this sort of 'rationalism' has not been able to maintain itself on the plane of direct mysticism. Hence the urge to make a mystery of everything, including rationalism."

In the Roman Catholic Church it is the neo-thomists (Maritain, Gilson) who are trying to turn everything into a "mystery". In the Protestant Church theologians like J. Hessen, Th. McPherson and Karl Barth * and his pupils are working on the same lines.

Barth's mysticism may be summed up in a single phrase: "it is not experience which makes faith real. The source of faith lies beyond man - in God, who arouses that faith in man"... This is why Barth is said to be nearer than he was to Roman Catholicism. And the conciliatory attitude which Roman Catholics show toward Barth is a sign of "the trend to reconciliation which prevails in the Roman Catholic Church today."

* Karl Barth: "Theologische Fragen und Antworten", (Gesammelte Werke, 1957, Volume 3) expresses the debate with Adolf Harnack for the first time.

The return to mysticism therefore goes hand in hand with the "mystification" of the basic scientific concepts of modern times, and an attempt to include them in the interpretation of the Bible, i.e. in dogma. In practice this means that "the theologians are continuing their struggle against science." It is only "the form of the struggle and the tactics which have changed"... "But this does not lessen the gulf which separates religion from science."

"Among the religious ideologies (writes Kryvelev) there are groups and individuals who, for subjective reasons, cannot be regarded as reactionary, because they deserve respect for their progressive action for the promotion of peace and peaceful coexistence between the nations. But this does not eliminate the differences of opinion which exist between them and ourselves, as adherents of the Marxist-Leninist ideology - whatever new forms the defence of religion may assume."

"It is therefore extremely important (for us Marxists-Leninists) to study contemporary theology very thoroughly."

The Historical Museum of Religion and Atheism, Leningrad

November 1959 was the 25th anniversary of the opening in Leningrad of the Museum of Religion and Atheism, by the Academy of Sciences in the USSR.

This museum, which is in the Khazansky Cathedral on the Nevsky Prospect, is the only museum in the Soviet Union today which "exhibits religious objects of scientific and artistic value for anti-religious purposes."

The fifth volume of the Year-Books published by the Academy of Sciences on questions of religion and atheism states, that no museum of religious history existed in Tsarist Russia, apart from itinerant exhibitions about "the history of Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, and Free Masonry."

"The principle of freedom of conscience, proclaimed by the October Revolution (in 1918) and consistently applied, offered great opportunities for propagating the ideology of scientific-materialism and (hence) for the struggle against religion, based on the achievements of modern science."

Gradually a number of anti-religious museums (large and small) were opened in different towns in Soviet Russia; in 1940 there were 19 of these museums, with a total of 47,355 exhibits.

In 1928 an exhibition was held in Leningrad entitled "Typology and Evolution of Religious Thought", consisting of objects from the Anthropological and Ethnographic Museum and from the Hermitage, the most important museum until war. This exhibition was permanently housed in 1930 in the big museum in the Khazansky Cathedral. Since then it has been considerably extended.

"It was deeply significant that a museum was housed in this former Cathedral - a museum whose purpose was to illustrate the struggle between materialism and idealism, science and religion, in the history of mankind."

The 19 anti-religious museums formerly scattered over the USSR have now been closed. But all the exhibits which increased the knowledge of this subject were brought to Leningrad, and are now housed in the museum there.

"The Museum in Leningrad (says the Year-Book) aroused keen interest. During the first years of its existence it was visited by 70,000 people per annum, and between 1954-1956 (after the museum had been extended from a propaganda-exhibition into a scientific museum) the number increased to 1,000,000 per annum."

The founders and directors of the museum include eminent atheists like V.G. Bogoroz-Tan, V.D. Bontsh-Brujevitsh and many others, who have since then filled 300 show-cases with objects and documents of all kinds. The exhibits show how the achievements of Soviet science, especially in the field of biology and physiology, are superseding religious concepts. "Thanks to these achievements the religious myths about the unchangeableness of nature and about the existence of a soul are being disproved."

The religious exhibits are arranged in historical order: the origin of religion, the different religions, religious development from primitive religion to the organised forms of the Christian religion through capitalism, the Church and sectarianism, the Papacy, Orthodoxy, etc.

Since it was opened the museum has published about 60 different anti-religious publications. Between 1954 and 1956 it brought out papers on "The Origin of the Christian Sacraments", "The Origin of the Cross", "Science foretells the Future", "Soviet Science in the struggle against Religious Superstition", and other similar subjects. They took the form of pamphlets or hand-books. The museum also produced a colour-film (of which a number of instalments have been produced) entitled "Light against Darkness".

Since 1956 the museum, under its Director Professor S.I. Kovalev, has been dealing with the same problems in China, in the USA, among the people of Papua, etc.

"The purpose of the museum is to help people who are still under the influence of religion to liberate themselves from it." It organised regular anti-religious exhibitions in different places, on definite subjects such as "The Russian painters and religion in Tsarist Russia", "The Vatican in the service of reaction", etc. It possesses over 300,000 exhibits of all kinds, including a beautiful collection of icons. Its library contains 200,000 volumes and is to be completed, as far as possible, by bibliographical rarities like the recently-discovered work "Giordano Bruno" (written 1590).

During the siege of Leningrad in the second world war, the staff of the anti-religious museum helped to protect the Cathedral and its exhibits from German bombing.

Recommended atheist writings

The latest publication of the Academy of Sciences in the USSR is entitled "Questions concerning the history of religion and atheism". The same publishers were responsible for the third volume of the "Year-Book of the Historical Museum of Religion and Atheism".

"Voprosy Filosofii" (Problems of Philosophy), the journal published by the Academy of Sciences, Volume 9, 1960, also refers to these publications as follows:

"The anthology, entitled 'Questions concerning the history of religion and atheism' (421 pp.) begins with an article by I.A. Kryvelev on 'Tendencies in Jewish-Christian theology today'. Basing his remarks on extensive source-material the author shows that the main trend in the contemporary 'reform' of Christian theology is a 'mystification of all the concepts connected with religion and with the creeds.'

"Two other chapters on 'The socialists and religion' and 'The Catholic Church and modern science' throw light on the problem of religious faith today from another aspect: that of the interrelation between religion and society.

"The first of these articles shows convincingly that the rapprochement between social democracy and Roman Catholicism in the West, is based on their mutual hostility to Marxism, for the purpose of strengthening their influence over the workers. Socialism in the past was neutral towards religion, but today it is ready to make a peaceful alliance with the Church. This "new line" was decided upon by the Socialist Party in Austria as early as 1956.

"The projection of the Soviet sputnik round the earth, however, was a new blow to religion, says the second article. Even the Pope could not ignore that fact. On the 22nd December 1957, in his Christmas Message, the Pope stated, in connection with the sputnik, that the glorification of 'human achievements' was dangerous because it blinded people to 'the majesty of God'. As they cannot deny the achievements of science, the church-people (Tserkovniki) are trying to detract from their importance by saying that they may give rise to all sort of social evils."

Other articles in the anthology deal with special questions in the history of religion and of the Church. Particularly interesting is an article by I.U. Budovnitz on "The Russian clergy in the first century under the yoke of the Mongolian tartars". In this article the author exposes the legend which still persists, that "the Russian clergy played a positive role during the years under the domination of the Mongolian tartars."

The "Year-Book of the Historical Museum of Religion and Atheism" (420 pp.) opens with an article on what Lenin said about the history of atheism. The article is a systematic introduction to the Year-Book as a whole. It shows how Lenin understood the essential stages of the history of atheism. One interesting point is that it brings out the fact that every atheist in ancient Greece raised a special problem. "Thus Xenophon connected atheism with mythology, folk-lore, etc."

In the section on "the atheism of the Soviet peoples" there is a striking article on the anti-religious satires of Turgenev, which shows how the (originally) religious outlook of this great writer was transformed under the influence of his friendship with the literary critic Belinsky (1843-1847) and by reading the anti-religious writings of Feuerbach. "The outcome was a little-known satire, reprinted in the anthology of the Academy of Sciences, in which Turgenev ridicules the biblical mythos in the witty manner of the classical French atheists."

Three chapters of the book are devoted to atheism in the people's democracies. For instance A. Iashek, in his article on the anti-clerical struggle in Czechoslovakia, describes the long struggle of the Czech people for social justice, often waged under religious slogans. G. Simon, writing on the history of atheist thought in Roumania, describes some Roumanian atheists of the past, "of whom the most outstanding personality is Vasile Komptas (1840-1884)".

The chapter on "freedom of conscience in the Bulgarian People's Republic" by M.N. Dobruskin gives an impression of the present religious situation in Bulgaria and the relation between Church and state.

The Year-Book concludes with two articles on the atheism of Lucretius "Perhaps it is hardly worth while publishing both articles simultaneously in one anthology," writes "Voprosy Filosofii", "because to a certain extent they say the same things." Furthermore the author of the articles, Professor A.O. Makovelsky, objects to "the attempts of bourgeois scholars to represent Epicurus and Lucretius as idealists and pioneers of Christianity." Such attempts (by the bourgeoisie) are nothing fresh, says Makovelsky. The church Fathers have always represented the ideas of many of the writers of antiquity as a testimony for so-called 'natural Christianity' (Tertullian: anima naturaliter christina).

Characters in Russian literature and their attitude to religion
Utshitel'skaia Gazeta (teachers' journal) 29th September 1960

"To quote an apt phrase of Maxim Gorky's, Russian writers have always been sincere fighters. They have devoted their whole lives, and all the power of genius which radiates from their hearts, in fervently proclaiming the truth which is valid for all men.

"The great writers of Russia have been impersonal in their attitude to religion, the Church and the clergy -- in fact to everyone who found it profitable to keep the people in fear of God, in order to protect the ruling classes who oppressed the people, and for their own selfish purposes.

"It is a striking fact that even those Russian writers who held aloof from the revolutionary struggle and did not accept the ideology of materialism, nevertheless were quite objective in their attitude towards the heads of the official religion and of the Church (so great is the power of Russian realism).

"An instance of this is Tolstoy's novel 'Resurrection' and the fact that this great writer was banned from the Church by order of the Holy Synod.

"Let us then consider Lisa Kalitina in Turgenev's novel 'A Nest of Gentlefolk'. Here again religion, and the Church, appear as oppressors of human happiness. Turgenev describes Lisa Kalitina's religiosity as the highest virtue; but to those who read him objectively this merely confirms the fact that the opiate of religion is the worst enemy which enslaves man, drugs his soul and cripples his life.

"In many of the works of N.S. Leskov and D.N. Mamin-Sibiriak (writers who played no part in the revolution) the clergy, religious superstition and religious prejudices are sharply criticised and ridiculed.

"Russian writers have created a whole gallery of characters who were disappointed by religion. They include some clergy and men who were training for the priesthood.

"The Protodiakon Olympii (in Kuprin's story 'Anathema') refused to bann the 'Bojar', Leo Tolstoy, from the Church, because his own soul had been deeply stirred by Tolstoy's genius. Instead of pronouncing the anathema the Protodiakon sang the 'Mnogaia Leta' (Long live Tolstoy!)

"In Chekov's story 'Anathema' the Bishop dies alone; no one needs him - either himself or other people or God to whom he had given his meaningless and joyless life.

"In Maxim Gorky's drama 'Dostiguev and the others', the 12-year-old girl Novize Taissia rebels against the supreme authority of the Abbess Melania.

"Our Russian literature is an encyclopaedia of atheism. The works of Belinsky, Herzen, Chernitchevsky, Dobroliubov, and Saltykov-Shtshedrin are full of atheistic ideas.

"A new book entitled 'Russian authors and religion' (edited by B.I. Surikov) published by the 'Sowjetskaia Rosia' press is therefore very timely.

"This anthology contains extracts from the works of the Russian and Soviet classics who have contributed to the treasures of the world's literature.

"This new book 'Russian authors and religion' provides incontestable proof that the great writers of the past courageously opposed the spiritual enslavement of man by religion, and disclosed the lies and hypocrisy of religious teachings, and the immorality of the clergy.

"Two-thirds of the book are devoted to 'The literature of the manifold Soviet peoples in the anti-religious struggle'.

"Here the reader will find extracts from the works of A. Upita and A.S. Isaakian, Jaroslav Galan and D. Pavlytsh. It also includes extracts from the works of older Soviet writers like A.S. Serafinovitch and A.S. Novikov-Priboi, and contributions from younger writers like L. Obukhov and V. Tendriakov.

"This useful book, which meets a real need, should be widely used by teachers, propagandists and authors in their work."

Sham's stick or the Rabbi on Golgotha

"The Old Testament contains the story of a rod which was destined to play an unusual role in the history of the Jewish people and of the Jewish faith, if the myth is to be believed.

"It was the miraculous rod of Moses, that rod which helped the legendary prophet to find the best way to lead the Jewish people out of Egypt.

"The elegant walking-stick recently shown to us in Tallinn (Esthonia) is probably not very much like the sacred rod of Moses. But it has just as much right to be included in the history of the Jews. It is connected with one of the latest chapters in their history, a chapter which ended far more tragically than their exodus from Egypt, a chapter which reminds one less of Moses than of Christ on his way to Golgotha."

After this introduction "Nauka i Religia" (No. 7, 1960) gives the following account of the Jewish tragedy in Tallinn. But before doing so, it describes the visit paid by M. Gata (the second secretary of the Israeli Embassy in Moscow) to the new synagogue in Tallinn at the Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashonu). "After the service the eminent visitor told the Jews in Tallinn that he was prepared to meet those who wanted to emigrate to Israel in the Palace Hotel. But to his disappointment no one came." The Jews had heard reports about Gata from Riga, which he had also visited, and they did not like those reports, particularly the evasive answer he gave when asked about the relations of the Prime Minister Ben-Gurion of Israel to the German Chancellor Adenauer, "the patron of the Nazis".

Ben-Gurion's curious attitude (continues "Nauka i Religia") is reminiscent of the sermons preached in Tallinn in 1941 by the Rabbi Hommer which helped to bring about the tragedy which followed.

"Nauka i Religia" divided this subject into three sections:

"The Crime of Rabbi Hommer"

"Where was Jahve looking?"

"The conviction of the criminal"

in which the history of the Jews in Tallinn is unfolded like a film.

Hommer was highly respected as a Rabbi. "God comes first, and you come second", he was assured. Unfortunately he was not so well informed about political matters.

"When the Soviet power was restored in Esthonia in 1940, Hommer welcomed it with great reserve. For the Communists are atheists. Hommer knew that from experience, because in the bourgeoisie of Esthonia there was a Jewish youth-group called 'Light' which cooperated with the Estonian and Russian Communists in the struggle against the fascist dictatorship and against the spread of Nazi propaganda in Esthonia. This Jewish group was composed entirely of atheists. Hommer therefore regarded Communism, and the Soviet system, as hostile and dangerous."

In actual fact "the Soviet Government did not touch the Christian churches or Jewish synagogues in Tallinn, while in Germany the synagogues had already been severely attacked"... "No, the Church and religion were not oppressed by the Soviets. On the other hand attendance at the synagogue and belief in Jahve-Adonai fell off tremendously, and Hommer held the Soviets responsible for this. He refused to realise that the fresh breeze of a new and joyous epoch of socialism had arisen in Esthonia."

"Hitler no longer inspired Hommer with terror. He said, the Communists were spreading exaggerated rumours about the cruelty of the Nazis. There must be some misunderstanding. The excesses under the Third Reich were merely due to fanatics. Sooner or later the government would accept reason. Hitler did not reject religion, he was not an 'atheist' and therefore would not attack those who worship Jahve. Moreover persecution would only strengthen the religious faith of the Jews." In his sermons, therefore, Hommer urged his congregation "not to pay too much attention to the exaggerations of Soviet propaganda, to stay quietly in Tallinn, and if the Germans marched in not to allow themselves to be evacuated to that unknown country, atheist Russia." The Germans would merely "paste the star of David on the breast of every Jew" ... "Ah, well, the Rabbi of Tallinn was not a bad chap, but of political matters he knew nothing whatsoever."

His ignorance was "to cause the extermination of thousands and thousands of people, and finally also his own death."

When the Soviet authorities offered him a visa to go to Russia "he blew the sacred dust of his faith into the faces of the representatives of the atheist power, and told them that, according to the teaching of the Gemara, a Rabbi must never desert his flock, even if there were only ten of them left."

Not all the Jews followed his example. "Some of them were more mature than their spiritual head. These Jews went to Russia and fought shoulder to shoulder together with the Soviet people in the war of liberation for Russia."

The Rabbi Hommer and his "Sham" (Synagogue-servant) stayed behind to comfort those who remained. Then began the story of the stick which old Sham used to help himself along when he accompanied the Rabbi. "A few days later the inhabitants of Tallinn were horrified to see the Rabbi staggering along being led through the streets with a rope round his neck, under the mocking laughter of the German conquerors in their dirty green uniforms." No one knew what his end was.

"In Esthonia all the Jews were systematically persecuted, rich and poor, whether they practised their religion or not. They were all to be exterminated and with them everyone with Sovietic or progressive ideas. The synagogue in the Tartu-Mantee (a street in Tallinn) was turned into stables."

In two extermination-camps, Klooga and Narva, the Esthonian Jews waited for their end. Klooga is a beautiful place in the pine-forests; but by a curious coincidence in the Jewish language 'Klog' means 'a place of suffering and tears, on which Jahve's eye looks down.'

Ultimately it came out that the Rabbi Hommer met his end in the following way. "After the war an old garage-worker turned up in Tallinn, who was inseparable from his stick. The warden in the synagogue thought he recognised that stick; it was the one which had belonged to Sham." "Instead of putting his trust in God, the warden took the matter into the law-court". The garage-worker was arrested. "It was Sepp, who had been in charge of the extermination-camp at Klooga. Sepp was a devout Lutheran, but that did not prevent him from quietly exterminating people in the camp ... As he was superstitious, Sepp decided, after burning Sham, to keep his stick as a talisman."

"After Hitler was defeated, Sepp and his wife arranged an original kind of resurrection-story". When the Soviet army marched into Tallinn, Mrs. Sepp got hold of the corpse of some unknown man and had it buried as her husband; the coffin was not even opened. But Sepp began 'another life' as a garage-worker in Tallinn, until the day when Shan's stick brought the truth to light. He confessed all, and said 'that the man who had been his superior officer was now working in Gehlen's organisation. (General Gehlen is in charge of the espionage-system of the Christian Chancellor Adenauer.)"

"The spectre of fascism is haunting Europe once again ... In an interview with the German soldiers' newspaper Gollstein, Rabbi of a synagogue in West Berlin, even stated that 'Hitler did not kill the Jews in the countries of Europe; he merely assigned them to special tasks.' Even Adenauer does not deny the fact that six million Jews were annihilated by Hitler. And the Jewish Rabbi Gollstein knows even better that that is so."

Conclusion: "One cannot help feeling disgusted when one reads about the touching friendship which exists between Adenauer and Ben-Gurion. According to these reports a treaty has been drawn up between these two states (the heads of which are both active in religion), whereby Israel promises to supply weapons to the Federal German Republic (i.e. the new armies of the fascist murderers). The government of Israel has thus concluded an alliance which tries to whitewash the Hitler régime and helps to restore the practices of fascism. But we must not forget the teaching of history. One cannot try Hitler's hangman, Eichmann, on the one hand, while extending the other hand to a man who shares his views ..."

Potshaev Abbey as described in "Komsomolskaia Pravda"

"On a high hill veiled in a soft mist stands a proud fairy-tale castle. Its golden cupolas gleam in the deep blue of the spring sky. The people in the bus - six or seven old women - cross themselves zealously. For this fairy-tale castle on the hill is the famous Potshaev Abbey. It belongs to the Russian Orthodox Church and is on the Western frontier of the Soviet Union.

"At the Western door of the monastery the visitors are welcomed by a black-robed figure, the head monk Savva. With a familiar gesture he bestows his blessing on the faithful and welcomes us with a friendly nod. He is a cheerful, courteous, obliging young man. He leads us into the monastery, and begins his description.

"Our monastery was built in 1240 by monks who were fleeing from the Tartars. They were living in caves and would perhaps soon have gone on again, but ...' (a reverent pause). 'but then a great miracle occurred. The monks saw a pillar of fire and in it the Mother of God. On the rocky summit of the hill she left her footprint, from which a spring of miraculous healing water immediately began to flow.'

"The faithful come thousands of kilometres on pilgrimage to this holy spring. They spend weeks and months here, expecting that a miracle will happen and that they will be cured. They sleep out in the open in all weathers in front of the church, and then they go away again - of course, without being cured."

This is how a correspondent of "Komsomolskaia Pravda" (the Journal of the Communist Youth Association in the USSR, Moscow, No 179, 1960) describes this place of pilgrimage, which is one of the largest abbeys in Russia.

"From a distance the abbey of Potshaev looks most impressive. It was built by great architects, and further additions have increased its beauty during the course of centuries. Not without reason the abbey was declared an architectural monument. But behind its venerable walls the most frightful hypocrisy, avarice and idleness have flourished for hundreds of years. That cannot be ignored"

"I came here from Sverdlovsk to look for a real sanctuary and honest servants of God", writes Zina Privalova, a young worker in concrete. "How naïve I was! The holy places in the abbey are nothing but a sham. The priests have only one idea in their heads, and that is to get as much money as possible out of the believers. And how the monks stare at the girls! Potshaev was an eye-opener to me. With their fairy-tales about a future life in paradise, these priests get money out of ignorant, credulous people, and use it to make themselves extremely comfortable in this world."

"This letter was brought to my notice at the administrative committee of the Komsomol", writes the correspondent of the "Komsomolskaia Pravda". "People are beginning to see through this fraud more and more, as Zina did."

"The main section of the article states that the spring has never effected any miraculous cures, and never will. A blind man who is said to have regained his sight at Potshaev was never really blind at all. Some crutches are on view, which are said to have been discarded by a lame man who was healed at Potshaev in 1911; but he can never have existed, for none of the old people remember any such occurrence."

"But one miracle did occur there, and quite recently. A young man named Nikolka, who was incurably blind, bathed his eyes in the Church with the holy water and cried out in triumph, 'I can see, I can see!' The pilgrims filled his pockets with gold, and called out 'A saint! A saint!' The saint was taken to the military authorities, so that official note could be taken of this extraordinary event. 'I'll never do it again, I promise you, I didn't mean to do anything wrong!' 'What do you mean? You deceived the people'. 'But the people wanted me to deceive them'..."

"The real explanation was that the young man had been cured by Father Xenophont, a monk who was an eye-doctor. It had nothing to do with the miraculous water."

"The monks are frequent patients in the polyclinic, and give us a lot of work", said the head doctor. "They persuade other people to try to get cured with holy water. But whenever they have a little scratch themselves, they come running to the hospital."

Andrei Rubliov: The pride of Russian art

Andrei Rubliov ranks among the greatest icon-painters in Russia. Together with other pictures of saints from the history of the Church, Rubliov's works are a splendid decoration in the Russian cathedrals and museums. The icons painted by him are conserved with the greatest care by experts in the state museums of the USSR.

September 14th was the 600th anniversary of the birth of this master of Russian icon-painters. To commemorate the occasion "Utchitelskaia Gazeta" (the teachers' magazine) published an article on September 12th entitled "The pride of Russian art". (This magazine is published under the slogan, "Proletarians of all nations, unite!").

"Tomorrow" writes the paper, "600 years will have passed since Andrei Rubliov was born. One would like to find words, simple but beautiful words, to match Rubliov's crystal-clear way of painting."

"Steeped in the glory of centuries the old grey monastery of Androniev rises proudly on the high banks of the River Jausa in front of the gates of Moscow. Its grey, venerable walls recall the times when the Russians went to war against the Tartars, their farewells in Moscow, and the burial of their heroes in a mass grave under the walls of the monastery after winning the battle of Kulikovo." It was here that "the great master, the monk Andrei Rubliov created his masterpieces".

"That was 600 years ago. At that time monasteries were the cradles of culture. But when necessary the monks shed their robes and mounted their battle-horses."

Rubliov was discovered by the Grand Duke Vassily (Basil), son of Tsar Dimitry Donskoy, when he painted his splendid frescoes in Blagovestshensky Cathedral (in the Kremlin at Moscow) in 1405.

Rubliov also illuminated the parchment copy of the Gospels which was named after its last owner, B.M. Khitrovo. Afterwards Khitrovo deposited the manuscript for safe custody at the Troitse-Sergieva monastery at Zagorsk, near Moscow.

"Utchitelskaia Gazeta" describes Rubliov's paintings "as the work of a genius". It compares "the icons of the Trinity to beautiful Russian folk-songs"... "In ancient Russia it was not the custom to call artists by their names. Rubliov's name, however, was recognised and honoured with gratitude by all classes of society."

"Andrei Rubliov heads the list of great artists in Russian history who (according to a special decree of Lenin) merit 'monumental propaganda'".

Only a small fraction of Rubliov's works survive today, and it is thanks to the Soviet régime that many of his works have been liberated from later coatings of paint. "It is thanks to the initiative of Lenin that Russia's art-treasures have been restored," continues "Utchitelskaia Gazeta".

"The 600th anniversary of Andrei Rubliov is being solemnly celebrated this autumn ... The Androniev monastery, the oldest in Moscow, has been completely restored for the occasion; its walls and spires rise again in their original splendour. Rubliov's splendid masterpieces have been uncovered with the greatest care and expert skill ... How many exciting hours of hard work this has involved. Whatever happens, the priceless frescoes must not be destroyed! Thus slowly, but systematically, more and more icons by the great artist are being brought to light."

"The art of Rubliov expresses a vast thought-world and profound insights", concludes "Utchitelskaia Gazeta". This "Russian Raphael" knew how to portray beauty. "His creations speak to all who love life and who love man. That is why we are so proud of him."

The "extraordinary value and significance" of the great religious artist Andrei Rubliov is pointed out to its young readers by the paper "Komsomol'skaia Pravda" (No 223, 1960).

In an article entitled "The world of beauty - light, symmetry and joy" the paper says that even people quite unacquainted with works of art will be amazed when they see the icon-paintings exhibited in the Tretyakov-Gallery, Moscow. There is a special exhibition at the present time of icons painted by Rubliov, which have an immediate appeal, because they are expressions of a special form of painting. These icons "cannot be judged by the usual standards of beauty to which we are accustomed. The master of this moving, sublime, quaintly imaginative yet uncommonly modest, laconic, wonderful and unique type of art" is the great Russian artist, A. Rubliov.

They are not pictures in the usual sense of the word, but icons painted on old wood, unusual in form and style. "And yet, when you have left the exhibition, although you may not have formed any clear impression of it as a whole, a sense of something great, harmonious and extraordinarily concise echoes in the memory, rather as if you had heard some solemn old melody by an unknown composer which touches you to the heart and you feel festive ..."

And then, when you go upstairs to the other rooms in the gallery with their contemporary pictures, which are more understandable to us today, "you feel that in those two small rooms downstairs you have left behind something original and significant."

"You will return to those two rooms again and again, and little by little you will begin to participate in this great art, and really understand and love it."

"Andrei Rubliov embodies the tremendous artistic experience of people in Russia long ago. He is the artist who is commemorated all over the world today."

"Rubliov's most famous and definitely his finest creation is his 'Holy Trinity', which he painted while he was decorating the Troitse-Sergieva monastery (in present-day Zagorsk)."

As one of the greatest works of art ever painted, Rubliov's "Holy Trinity" deserves to be placed on a par with Raphael's "Sixtine Madonna" and Rembrandt's "Prodigal Son".

"But isn't that just a phrase?" you will ask. "Raphael needs no special explanation. Everyone can perceive the beauty of his works. It inspires and wins us immediately."

"That may be true. But in order to grasp the full greatness and the full magic of Rubliov's 'Holy Trinity' one has to share the experience it portrays, one must accustom oneself to what at first sight (but only at first sight) strikes one as strange in it, one must gaze attentively and lovingly at it, listening to this unusual language in which old Russian painting still speaks to us today..."

"The idea expressed in the 'Holy Trinity' is a religious one, for no other form of painting except church painting existed in Russia in those days."

"Three figures - three angels - are sitting round a table sharing Communion. They are sunk in conversation, a long, silent, poignant conversation. One of the three must sacrifice himself so that his death may atone for the evil in the world."

"The tragic significance of the situation is expressed by the artist in an extraordinarily clear, calm, brightness."

"The religious content of the legend 'is eclipsed by the beauty and deeply human significance of the picture.' Without understanding the ideas or knowing the biblical legend, you will nevertheless feel the atmosphere of the picture working upon you, its quietness, its purity radiating into you ..."

"The scene depicted is deeply tragic, and Rubliov has certainly not failed to portray its religious significance. On the contrary, it is the religious idea which inspired him. But man's genius is so great that the work he has created is like the stone which starts an avalanche. His original idea develops into a vast conception which completely transforms it."

"The biblical symbol becomes a symbol of human life with its love, suffering and beauty. That is how we interpret Rubliov's 'Holy Trinity' today" ...

"At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th people began to be interested again in Rubliov, and since then their interest in old Russian art has increased daily ... That is understandable, for the heritage of Rubliov is our national pride. We must keep it, never forget it, and (strange as it may sound) love it."

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